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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 10, 2006

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VIA FACSIMILE AND U.S. MAIL
IMMEDIATE ATTENTION REQUESTED

The Honorable Kathleen Babineaux Blanco
Governor, State of Louisiana
1001 Capitol Access Road
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Re: Imposing Tolls On I-10 And I-12

Dear Governor Blanco:

I have just learned that your Administration has submitted a formal and official "Expression of Interest" application to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration to impose tolls on I-10 and I-12. As your written request states, the application is for the entire 360 mile I-10/ I-12 corridor and its 40 plus miles of spurs and loops. According to transportation officials, it could involve several stations at which tolls would be collected, making the cumulative tolls particularly high.

I write to express my strong opposition to this proposal and to ask that you withdraw the application.

Governor, I would oppose these sorts of tolls on existing roadways like I-10 and I-12 under any circumstances. But in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, I think that it is a particularly bad and unfair idea.

I-10 and I-12 are lifelines for tens of thousands of people whose lives were wrecked by the hurricanes. Many of them must commute on these highways daily, often traveling far distances to work and to repair their severely damaged homes. To impose a significant tax on these trips – on top of their hurricanes losses, on top of high gasoline prices – is wrong and counterproductive.

Slapping tolls on I-10 and I-12 would impose an unfair burden not only on these motorists, but on Louisiana businesses including the trucking and freight industry also. In response, truckers would certainly seek alternative routes to avoid the tolls, and thus revenue generated from the tolls would be reduced, as would state sales tax revenue along the entire route. In addition, many businesses along the interstate spend millions of dollars on their exit locations. Tolling would have a clear negative impact on these businesses.

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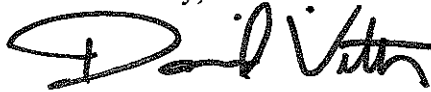
I have worked hard to secure federal funding for our state's vital transportation projects. During last's year passage of the Federal Highway Bill, I worked with the other members of our delegation to obtain \$2.9 billion in federal formula funding for Louisiana over the next 5 years – more then ever before. This major increase in federal funding was designed specifically to support the state's transportation priorities which could include improving I-10 and I-12 to support hurricane evacuation needs.

In addition to this \$2.9 billion, the entire delegation came together and secured approximately half a billion dollars for specific transportation projects like I-49 North and South, LA 1, LA 28, and improvements to I-10 and I-12. This funding, matched with a strong state funding commitment which our increased formula funding makes possible, should improve Louisiana's transportation infrastructure by completing current projects, which in turn will spur economic development.

Finally, Governor, I regret that this very significant formal submission was made by your Administration to the federal government with no adequate briefing of me or, as far as I know, other members of our delegation.

Governor, please withdraw this application. Together, we can meet our transportation needs without taxing already stressed hurricane victims.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Vitter", with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Vitter
United States Senator

CC: The Honorable Mary Landrieu, United States Senator
The Honorable Richard Baker, Member of Congress
The Honorable Jim McCrery, Member of Congress
The Honorable William Jefferson, Member of Congress
The Honorable Rodney Alexander, Member of Congress
The Honorable Bobby Jindal, Member of Congress
The Honorable Charles Boustany, Member of Congress
The Honorable Charlie Melancon, Member of Congress
J. Richard Capka, Administrator, Federal Highway Administration
Johnny Bradberry, Secretary, Louisiana Department of Transportation and
Development